

ORIGINAL APPLICATION WITH SPECIFICATION LINE NUMBERS

Electronic Version 1.2.8

Stylesheet Version 1.0

Shop By Brands Internet (Online) Portal

Background of Invention

[0001] 1 This patent proposal is in the field of Internet applications. (U. S. Patent

2 Classification Definitions were checked. While the Data Processing selections came
3 closest, they did not seem entirely applicable to this invention.) Specifically, it offers a
4 new, more satisfying and successful way for online customers to begin their shopping
5 and buying experience on the web and for brand marketing companies to reach and
6 satisfy those customers there.

[0002] 7 Recent internet audience research (Forrester Research's technographics studies
8 and American Express Global Internet Survey, 2000) confirms that online consumers
9 prefer to buy direct from brand names where they feel they will get the best price and
10 the most complete range of products. Research also shows that most consumers
11 begin their internet shopping by seeking their favorite brand names via search
12 engines that are not found to deliver a clean, concise, accurate or uncluttered search
13 list.

[0003]

14 There are numerous URLs that have the word "brand" in the name, i.e.
15 brandwise.com, brandmall.com, etc. There are a number of web sites where you will
16 find brand name merchandise. None of these alternatives accommodate all the brand
17 names or even 50 % of them -- in a particular product category. In most cases a brand
18 name appears only if that company has struck a marketing deal with the search
19 engine or commerce web site. More research indicates that 56% of catalogue searches
20 on business to consumer online retail sites fail -- and 93% on business to business e-
21 commerce sites -- because these searches usually turn up extraneous results that are

1 too lengthy and tedious to sort through. Therefore, consumers need an easy way to be
2 reminded of and to find brand name web sites for their online shopping pleasure.
3 Consumers need www.shopbybrands.com. With this internet/web application,
4 customers don't have to know or guess at a brand company's URL until they get it
5 right. They also don't need to hunt through the numerous listings returned by a
6 search engine that may or just as likely may not include the correct URL. Also, with
7 this application, brand companies don't have to register and buy multiple URL's to
8 ensure their customers can find them on the web; be concerned with customers
9 misspelling their company name or not remembering it altogether and pay
10 competitive prices to buy URL's with their company name that could be owned by
11 someone else. This brand and product search engine would eliminate all these
12 problems because customers wouldn't have to make more than one attempt to find a
13 brand web site and brand companies wouldn't have to spend as much money as they
14 do today purchasing multiple URL's and expensive drive to web campaigns.

Summary of Invention

[0004] 15 This is a request for a patent for a unique Internet search engine and marketing
16 model. Specifically, a customer accesses or is delivered a web page with her computer
17 or other online devise. She either types or inputs in some way onto that web page 1) a
18 brand name and 2) a product category (optional) and is returned a page with a
19 company's URL address and link to the actual brand site. In its most basic terms this
20 web application is an exclusive but all inclusive search engine for the top infinite
21 number of brand name companies. It can also be thought of as a brand cybermall
22 where customers can find the brand company they want to shop and be navigated to
23 their front door. It is not an online transactional commerce site itself, but rather it
24 delivers shoppers to the brand name commerce site where the actual purchase would
25 transpire.

Detailed Description

[0005]
26 The primary objective of this invention is to inform the end-user of a brand
27 company's URL, although other compelling value added benefits will be explored and
28 offered later on after the initial introduction of the service. This is a request for a

1 patent for a unique Internet search engine and marketing model. Specifically, a
2 customer accesses or is delivered a web page with her computer or other online
3 device. She either types or inputs in some way onto that web page 1) a brand name
4 and 2) a product category (optional) and is returned a page with a company's URL
5 address and link to the actual brand site. In essence this returned page acts like a
6 jump page to the company's homepage. In its most basic terms this web application
7 is an exclusive but all inclusive search engine for *all* the top infinite number of brand
8 name companies. It can also be thought of as a brand cybermall where customers can
9 find the brand company they want to shop and be navigated to their front door. It is
10 not an online transactional commerce site itself, but rather it delivers shoppers to the
11 brand name commerce site where the actual purchase would transpire.

[0006]/12 Consumers can also enter a product category by itself in return for a list of brand
13 names and URL's that offer that particular product line. Regardless of the business
14 models outlined below, it's important that *all* the most well known brands in each
15 category be searchable. One of the unique advantages of this concept is that
16 consumers should feel that they can find any brand's URL and that their search not be
17 dependent on advertising or sales arrangements.

[0007]/18 Other useful company information can also be served with the URL on a jump
19 page or an "Enhanced URL Page." This page presents more frequently requested basic
20 information -- special promotions, store locations, store hours, phone numbers,
21 current sales, etc. -- the types of things consumers would normally want to know
22 right away when in a shopping mode. More research will be conducted to better define
23 these needs so as to better advise brand companies who choose to take advantage of
24 this added feature.

[0008]

25 What is being proposed here is a simple yet new and unique alternate approach to
26 initiate online shopping for consumers and consumer brand companies. (This concept
27 is easily expanded to a business to business commerce scenario as well.) While there
28 are numerous web sites that provide e-commerce with a focus on brands, none of
29 them have been designed or developed in a manner that more intuitively reflects and
30 duplicates how a customer generally prefers to shop, i.e., starting with brand names

1 they know and trust.

[0009] 2 This service is named "Shop By Brands" and can be accessed at
3 www.shopbybrands.com. (The inventor currently owns this URL.) Depending on the
4 business model, consumers could be served the site from a sponsor's web presence
5 as well. As an added convenience for frequent web shoppers, it can also be reached by
6 installing an icon right onto the consumer's desktop.

[0010] 7 This innovative proposal translates this preferred brand shopping experience to
8 the Internet and starts to deliver what some of the basic research is telling us online
9 audiences want. It's based on two premises: 1) *Technographics research shows that*
10 *consumers begin their internet shopping trips at search engine sites, where they seek*
11 *out a particular brand or product.* This is the first step in building an experiential
12 brand for the end-user. So the company's web site or URL better appear and without
13 any other competing, compromising or distracting data if this brand experience is to
14 be initiated on a positive note. However, returned search lists are long and delivered
15 with other extraneous information that take the user time to read through to find
16 what they want.

[0011] 17 The presence of popular and familiar brand names are instrumental in increasing
18 the selling power of the internet. Consumers in general have established a certain
19 comfort level with these companies that cannot afford to be adversely effected with
20 their online experience. The brand's attributes must be reflected from the moment
21 the user thinks of the name, enters it in a search box and reviews the returned search
22 page. Brand companies can't control this task and because a consumer's initial online
23 experience is critical to sustaining their comfort level with the brand, successful and
24 positive brand impressions are repeatedly and totally abandoned on the web every day
25 as a result.

[0012] 26 What if a consumer can't think of the brand name when beginning their search? If
27 the brand hasn't partnered with that portal/search engine, your customer will be
28 delivered a list of competitors. In both cases brand companies can lose their
29 customers before they've even arrived at their site.

[0013] 1 2) Consumers expect manufacturing brands to sell direct over the internet even if
2 they've never sold direct before. They assume brand sites are the best place to shop
3 for and purchase products at the lowest price. This is because supply & demand is
4 more instantaneous and therefore becomes more apparent on the web, the premise
5 for such sites as Mercata, DealTime, mySimon and Bottomdollar. Prices fall naturally to
6 the lowest competitive point and vary more as demand shifts.

[0014]
7 This concept of Dynamic Trade offers greater benefits to direct sellers than
8 indirect ones on the Internet. The direct sellers who build their online business around
9 intangible assets, such as customer base and technology infrastructure, will reap the
10 greatest rewards. This is the key to creating economies of scale. As a result physical
11 distributors will be more important to brand manufacturers as sales through retail
12 stores are replaced in part by direct sales over the Internet. Because consumers look
13 for the products first at foremost brand sites, most manufacturers are hosting their
14 own consumers in search of products. Another reason consumers prefer to buy directly
15 from a brand name company is because they are also attracted to web sites that offer
16 a complete range of products. Retail web sites and online malls who must achieve a
17 certain scale in order to be competitive, such as brandwise.com and buy.com, sell
18 brand products but normally never a brand's entire product line. Brand companies
19 wanting to increase their reach on the internet can negotiate a deal with one of these
20 shopping web sites or malls whereby specific brand products are made available on
21 the reseller's site but again never the complete inventory. In addition retail sites do
22 not usually display the brand's image satisfactorily, compromising comfort levels as
23 alluded to above. So if consumers look for products first at brand sites, why make
24 them go somewhere else to buy? There are numerous working URLs that have the word
25 "brand" in the name. There are also a number of web sites that aim to provide a
26 shopping experience where you will find brand name merchants and merchandise.
27 However, no other online commerce site delivers the capability of finding actual brand
28 companies' own web sites quickly and easily within an e-commerce environment.
29 ShopByBrands is not a commerce engine, which means transactions are not performed
30 on the site unlike most of these other online malls. Also, the sites referenced below
31 only offer a specific number of brand names and a finite range of their products in

1 limited product categories. Some of these dot.coms are: *Brandwise* is a comparison-
2 shopping web site that offers consumers home products only, i. e., washing machines,
3 dryers, refrigerators, microwaves, dishwashers, cooking units, TVs, DVD players and
4 camcorders on www.brandwise.com. There are plans to include other product
5 categories including lawn and garden, small appliances, baby products, etc. (Web site
6 currently under transition.) *Brandsmall* is an internet retailer of brand name consumer
7 products, i.e., consumer electronics, home and garden, home office, health and
8 beauty, jewelry, gifts and more. They provide simple product search tools, many
9 product suggestions and clearance and sale sections. They also provide customer
10 service representatives and a 30-day return policy.

[0015] 11 *Price Watch* is advertised as "the fastest way to find a great street price on a
12 computer product." A user can use the 'search' box or click through category or
13 manufacturer lists. Dealers advertise and maintain their prices on Price Watch using
14 their proprietary systems. At this time, there is a limited product category site.

[0016] 15 *Priceline* has pioneered a unique new type of e-commerce with which most
16 everyone is familiar. Consumers can use the Internet to save money on a wide range
17 of products and services by bidding on the items. This "name your price" approach
18 also enables sellers to generate incremental revenue. Consumer demand (in the form
19 of individual customer offers guaranteed by a credit card) is collected for a particular
20 product or service at a price set by the customer and communicated directly to
21 participating sellers or to their private databases. Consumers agree to hold their
22 offers open for a specified period of time to enable priceline.com to fulfill their offers
23 from inventory provided by participating sellers. Once fulfilled, offers generally cannot
24 be canceled. By requiring consumers to be flexible with respect to brands, sellers
25 and/or product features, sellers are enabled to generate incremental revenue without
26 disrupting their existing distribution channels or retail pricing structures. In this
27 model, clearly brand is of the least importance.

[0017]
28 *Buy.com* offers the latest computer hardware and software, the newest releases of
29 videos and DVDs, the hottest console and PC games, chart-topping music CD's and
30 the top selling books all at guaranteed everyday low prices. A sister site,

1 BuyClearance.com, sells closeout items at greater savings. Shoppers can purchase
2 computers from BuyComp.com and add their favorite CD from BuyMusic.com with all
3 their purchases combined into one easy checkout basket. The product categories are
4 limited to the ones stated above for the present.

[0018] 5 *Mercata's* premise is simple: pool the purchasing power of buyers who have a
6 common goal of buying and receiving a discount on goods and services. Then,
7 connect those buyers with the sellers of those products and services. Each buyer can
8 generally benefit by achieving a lower price than would have been possible for an
9 individual, and sellers can benefit by engaging in one large, low-cost transaction. In
10 short, it's often a win-win for both buyers and sellers because individual buyers are
11 able to combine their purchasing power to receive volume pricing benefits on featured
12 merchandise. Product categories include appliances, baby products, electronics,
13 gifts and gadgets, home and kitchen items, lawn and garden products, luggage,
14 sporting goods, tools, and watches and jewelry. While visitors can browse and shop by
15 consumer brands, the list of names is limited and the emphasis is on price not brand.
16 (Now defunct) *InternetMall*, a comparison shopping network, is a part of the Network
17 Commerce Consumer Network (NCCN) featuring over 900,000 businesses and
18 merchants in over 230 countries. It consists of ShopNow.com
19 (<http://www.shopnow.com>), a leading shopping network and directory featuring over
20 60,000 merchants; SpeedyClick.com (<http://www.speedyclick.com>), a leading
21 commerce-enabled entertainment community; and over 35,000 affiliate sites. NCCN is
22 primarily a leading provider of technology infrastructure, services and networks for
23 businesses, merchants, Internet sites, and wireless networks conducting commerce
24 online. *Dealttime* is a free online comparison shopping service that is intended to save
25 the consumer time and money shopping on the Internet. DealTime searches across
26 the web for sites offering the best deals on products. It's not an online store itself but
27 rather a site that lists deals from online stores, auctions and buying groups that
28 match the buyer's criteria. Their goal is to help the end-user reduce their comparative
29 shopping from days to a few minutes. The product categories are limited at this stage
30 and again the emphasis is on price not brand.

[0019] 31 *Storerunner* was one of the first online shopping sites on the Web to offer a wide

1 selection of products and services from the most trusted retailers, with technologies
2 enabling users to shop online or in their own neighborhoods. Their expanded
3 database contains over one million products in over 8,000 different categories.
4 StoreRunner has embedded its cutting-edge shopping technologies, rich content, and
5 flexible interface into a continually expanding network of high-traffic web enterprises
6 including Verizon, Juno Online Services, DoubleClick and FreeLotto. Through this
7 network, StoreRunner helps destination and portal sites increase their site traffic and
8 enhance their online communities, while placing the products and services of
9 StoreRunner's merchants within reach of millions of online shoppers. Here retailers
10 are searched not brands.

[0020] 11 *MySimon* helps consumers shop for millions of products at thousands of online
12 stores. It's not an online store; they don't sell anything. It's not a generic search
13 engine either; they don't simply list the names of every store on the Web. Rather they
14 offer an unbiased service that helps shoppers decide what to buy and where to buy it.
15 They do this by a team of helpers built with patent-pending software. The Virtual
16 Learning Agent™ technology creates "intelligent agents" trained by a team of
17 shopping experts to collect information from any online store NOT brand sites.
18 Merchants aren't required to pay to be a part of the service. However, a few places
19 around the pages are offered for advertisers with several ways to deliver their
20 message. Their goal is to win shopper's respect as the place to start shopping online,
21 no matter what the product. They not only compare prices but also show product
22 availability, shipping specifications, and other useful information where possible.

[0021] 23 *ShopForBrands* attempts to provide shoppers a one stop shopping place for
24 viewing and buying good quality products and services at extremely reasonable prices
25 from reputed merchants. By providing multiple links, they encourage shoppers to
26 spend a little time and visit different sites, compare prices and features to find the
27 online merchant offering the most reasonable price. Their goals are to be able to
28 generate revenues from this shopping portal (when you buy something through the
29 merchants listed on ShopForBrands, those merchants pass on a commission back to
30 ShopForBrands) to donate to those charities, which provide support to children.

[0022] 1 The steps to create this service are just as simple as the service itself:* Recruit
2 executive management, marketing, commerce, business development and technical
3 development skills* Research to learn more about how mainstream consumers and
4 online laggards want to use the internet to shop.

[0023] 5 * Research and create a list of the top (number to be determined) brands name
6 companies and their product categories.

[0024] 7 * Evolve and sell the marketing model.

[0025] 8 * Design and program the search engine.

[0026] 9 * Develop a directory ad campaign and solicit brand name companies.

[0027] 10 * Develop a consumer ad campaign.

[0028] 11 * Design www.shopbybrands.com web site* Develop prototype site to use to sell
12 concept to advertisers and consumers. Several different business models and separate
13 category of investors can be considered for www.shopbybrands.com because its easy
14 ability to create an online community is advantageous to a number of players in the
15 Internet space. These multiple possibilities can also complement each other and be
16 combined in various fashions. One can be the exit strategy for the other. Below is an
17 overview of the potential models and investors: *VC Funded* This proposal can be
18 backed in the traditional dot.com manner by securing funds from one or several
19 venture capital investment firms. While this type of funding may be more difficult to
20 find due to the recent failures of a number of well-known dot.coms, some VC funders
21 will see this business proposition's uniqueness. They'll see it as a realistic way to
22 engage large communities of users in a more gratifying experience.

[0029]
23 This type of funding is based on showing a profit (ROI) within a specific
24 timeframe. In this event ShopByBrands can create revenue in two ways: brand
25 advertising on the site and a percentage share (one to five percent) of each e-
26 commerce transaction on a brand's site tracked back to www.shopbybrand.com. The
27 financials have not been forecasted in this early proposal although these two revenue
28 streams have proved positive on paper and in execution many times before. Any

- 1 advertising revenue stream will need to be more inventive than the usual banner
2 advertising, which continues to wane as a results-driven online advertising choice for
3 brand marketers.

[0030] 4 A unique advertising model that could prove very successful has similarities to
5 directory advertising. Every brand gets a simple web page with their URL on it as
6 described above. They can also elect to provide content for the "Enhanced URL Page,"
7 a ShopByBrands template page that delivers other pertinent shopping information,
8 such as store locations and departments, special events and store promotions. While
9 there will be no initial fee for providing this additional information, later releases will
10 offer features for brands to take advantage of via a rate card.

[0031] 11 Established search engines could be viewed as competitors who could easily
12 mimic this business model. However they would have to do so at the risk of alienating
13 the online malls who are major advertisers and partners on their sites. This overall
14 concept does not ultimately work to their advantage and in fact impacts these
15 cybermalls in quite the opposite fashion because it promotes shopping at brand sites
16 not cybermalls or reseller sites. It's the brand sites that can elect to link their
17 consumers to these retail sites as part of their sales channels. This would necessitate
18 a different pricing structure to be negotiated between these sites and the brands not
19 www.shopbybrands.com.

[0032] 20 *Internet Portal, Online Retail Site, ISP or ASP Owned* An Internet portal or search
21 engine, such as Yahoo or Alta Vista, are already the beginning sites for a good
22 majority of consumer shopping experiences. Any of these would also be logical
23 candidates for this proposal. As previously stated, these established URL's could also
24 present potential competition to this concept in that they could find a way to easily
25 replicate it. They could avoid any conflict with online mall sites that are their
26 advertisers if this innovation did not come from a third-party representative. For that
27 matter the online malls that offer a vast range of brand products would also be an
28 ideal funder or takeover initiator as they're already identified as a place to shop for
29 brands.

[0033]
30 ISP's like AT&T Worldnet or MSN are obvious choices to own this concept as well.

- 1 They are also already the initial starting place for millions of Internet users.
- 2 ShopByBrands helps keep their customers on their pages, which makes them stronger
- 3 destination sites on the Internet.

[0034] 4 *Marketing Company Sponsored* This proposal also presents a unique opportunity

- 5 for a large business to business corporation that normally spends a huge amount of
- 6 its marketing budget appealing to other large brand name companies. Their goal
- 7 would not have to be to make a profit as this would not be a product line for them.
- 8 Rather it could complement a service they are already selling as a value added feature.
- 9 For example, a company that sells web-hosting services to a brand name company
- 10 could also offer special positioning for their largest customers on
- 11 www.shopbybrands.com as an additional selling point. While all brands need to be
- 12 included in the brand database, a corporation could feature their more profitable
- 13 brand clients in a special way.

[0035] 14 Reviewing a list of corporations whose product line is targeted at most if not all

- 15 major brand name companies would be a likely place to begin identifying possible
- 16 candidates. Entertainment and telecommunications companies are some of the more
- 17 logical opportunities. The television industry relies heavily on brand name commercial
- 18 sponsorship. Telephone companies already publish directories, offline and online, that
- 19 deliver company names as a result of a search effort on the part of a customer. Their
- 20 advertisers could be offered premier listing on www.shopbybrands.com or a hot link
- 21 similar to directory advertising. Directory advertising has different tiers....a regular
- 22 listing, a bolded listing, a featured box, etc. These tiers could be based on the amount
- 23 of revenue generated from their customer accounts.

[0036]

- 24 Other hardware, software and services companies that are particularly known for
- 25 their reputation in the internet space, such as IBM, Microsoft and Federal Express
- 26 would also benefit from owning such a consumer web experience. It enhances their
- 27 own identity on the web and creates a practical reason for users to come to their site
- 28 thereby increasing their own traffic and marketing possibilities. They can offer their
- 29 own brand name customers special treatment on this brand-focused site. As the
- 30 traffic to www.shopbybrands.com grows, the site becomes quite valuable in terms of

(delivering audience numbers.

[0037] 2 The marketing corporation could also buy this concept and/or site from its
3 originators or a VC firm and run it for themselves. This online presence could be
4 incorporated with their corporate web site and with an already existing legacy
5 database of the company's customers.

[0038] 6 The beginning link to www.shopbybrands.com could be positioned on the
7 marketing company's own homepage. The success of such a useful tool would attract
8 consumers to the marketer's site more frequently presenting the opportunity for them
9 to build their brand image and increase their traffic on the marketing company's own
10 corporate site. This is important as getting consumers to your website needs to be
11 innovated again and again in many amazing and original ways. This is an answer to
12 every corporation's current challenge how to reinvent themselves on the Internet?
13 ebusiness Consulting Company Supported Other types of companies that could benefit
14 from owning this concept and engine are consulting and strategic planning companies
15 like an Oxford or Anderson. Also interactive advertising agencies and backend
16 software development companies that have both redefined themselves as e-business
17 strategy companies, such as a Sapient or a Modem Media, should also be considered.
18 The Internet is the apex of an e-business. These service companies are retained by
19 brand name clients to help them move their operations and commerce to the web.
20 Hosting links to brand name sites, some of which these consulting companies help
21 built, is a credible way to prove their e-commerce and e-business expertise. They
22 would value being known as the web site to go to begin an online commerce event. It
23 would increase their visibilty in the business marketplace.

[0039] 24 These companies also have natural brand expertise because of what they've
25 gained from their traditional consulting work. They understand how all well know
26 brand companies operate who are their primary bread and butter clients. Underwriting
27 ShopByBrands and offering it to their clients as a value add helps to support their
28 sales premise and corporate mission.

[0040] 29 Because anyone of these models could be successful, one can represent a way for
30 the group creating and managing the business to be initially funded while another can

- 1 be a means for the incubators to exit increasing the financial options and fallback
- 2 strategies.

[0041]

Claims

[c1] 1 What I claim as my invention is the ability to search for brand name companies"
2 URL addresses exclusively within the Internet and interactive television
3 environments. In other words, the users expectation of finding a specific
4 company's URL in one or two clicks without the need to read a list of returned
5 options can be realized. The URL is found by either inputting what is or is
6 thought to be the correct spelling of a company's name and/or a specific
7 product line. The only URL's returned to the user are those of the brand name
8 company or companies in the case of a product line search. Links to sites other
9 than the brand company site being searched (i.e., a publishing or media web
10 site like msnbc.com or time.com) with information about that company or
11 similar companies is not a part of this claim.

[c2] 12 This patent should cover any online application that promises to deliver
13 company URL addresses as the first and primary piece of information that is
14 returned to a search user. The user's goal and expectation are ultimately to get
15 to a brand name company's homepage or a substitute portal or jump page as
16 determined by the brand name company swiftly and in a seamless manner as
17 possible.

Shop By Brands Internet (Online) Portal

Abstract of Disclosure

1 Searching for and finding information on the Internet is not new and searching for
2 and finding brand products isn't either. Searching for business URL addresses with the
3 expectation of receiving a correct URL clearly displayed by itself without any other
4 related and supportive information is new. An online consumer reaching a brand
5 name site in fewer clicks with a greatly shortened list of search returns would
6 differentiate from the current lengthy online experience. This is the experience this
7 invention is hoping to replace.